

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

TRIBUTE TO BELARUSAN INDEPENDENCE

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 22, 1995

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, March 26, 1995, the Belarusian American Association, Inc., in New Jersey will commemorate the 77th anniversary of the Proclamation of the Belarusian Democratic Republic at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick, NJ. It will be a great honor and a privilege for me to participate in this important event.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is particularly important at this moment in history that we proclaim our strong support for the Republic of Belarus and the other Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union. The ongoing Russian military action in Chechnya raises serious questions about the possibility of imperialistic designs by Russia on former nations under its empire—whether Czarist or Soviet. President Yeltsin, whose control over the situation seems to be less than secure, has bowed to nationalist and militarist forces in Moscow on the Chechnya question. While the official status of Chechnya as a part of the Russian Federation is different from the other independent former Soviet Republics, such as Belarus, the Yeltsin government has created a very troubling precedent. There are clearly forces in Russia that seek to reassert control over the neighboring countries.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States has sought to provide economic assistance to the Newly Independent States. Amid the pressures that many of these states are now under because of structural economic problems, ethnic tensions and the threat of Russian imperialism, we must maintain a strong commitment to helping these emerging nations achieve a democratic political system and a market economy. For nearly half a century, we devoted considerable sums to containing the Soviet threat. Now that the Soviet Union has collapsed, we have the opportunity, with much more modest levels of spending, to invest in the long-term stability of these formerly captive nations.

Mr. Speaker, it is actually on March 25 that Belarusians throughout the world salute the sacrifices and bravery of the members of the Council of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, who in 1918 liberated their country from the harsh and oppressive Czarist and Soviet rule. Representatives of the United Councils of the First Belarusian Convention, meeting in the capital city of Minsk [Minsk], issued a proclamation of independence of the Belarusian National Republic, adopted a national flag with three horizontal stripes—white, red and white—and received widespread international recognition. For the first time since 1795, the Belarusian nation re-emerged as an independent state. Despite the hardships from the First World War and the revolutionary turmoil in

neighboring Russia, the Belarusian language, culture, and national identity flourished.

Unfortunately, the freedom and independence of the Belarusian nation did not last long. In 1921, Russia's Bolshevik regime invaded and conquered the Newly Independent State and renamed it the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. For the next 70 years, the Belarusian people endured a totalitarian Communist regime, denied the most basic civil and political rights. Millions of Belarusian nationals were exterminated. Although the Byelorussian SSR was officially considered a member of the United Nations since 1945, the country was in fact politically and militarily dominated by Moscow, with the Belarusians' aspirations for self-government and independence completely subverted.

The Belarusian Parliament initially declared its independence back in July 1990. Following the attempted coup against Soviet President Gorbachev in August 1991, the Speaker of the Belarusian Supreme Council, Stanislav Shuskevich invited Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk to Belarus in December 1991 to finally bury the moribund Soviet Union. In its place was established the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS] with Minsk as its administrative seat. Although the Belarusian Parliament, as many other emerging East European democracies, was dominated by former Communists, protections for Belarusian culture, as well as basic human rights, were enacted. On June 23, 1994, Belarus held its first multiparty presidential elections since its independence, with a runoff election on July 10, 1994. The winner, Aleksandr Lukashenka, was a former Communist Party official and former head of the parliament's Anti-Corruption Committee. The Helsinki Commission, which observed the elections, proclaimed that the elections were conducted in conformance with international practices and that the results reflected the freely expressed will of the electorate.

Mr. Speaker, since my wife Sarah is part Belarusian, I have had the opportunity to become particularly familiar with this proud people. My district, the Sixth District of New Jersey, is home to a significant Belarusian-American community. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Americans in general have had the opportunity to learn more about this distinct land and its culture. In 1994 President Clinton visited the Belarusian capital, and a variety of United States public and private sector initiatives have been launched in Belarus. Let us resolve to continue to improve the economic, security, and cultural ties between the great peoples of the United States and the Republic of Belarus.

STATEMENT ON TAYLOR EMERGENCY TIMBER SALVAGE SALE AMENDMENT

HON. JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 22, 1995

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Taylor emergency timber salvage sale amendment. This legislation responds to the 33 lives lost fighting forest fires last year; it responds to the \$1 billion spent by the taxpayer fighting high-intensity out-of-control forest fires; it responds to millions of dollars in revenues forgone by Federal and State governments; and it responds to the environmental disaster facing our Nation's forests by prescribing clearly what must be done to begin to alleviate our national forest health problem.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment mandates the removal of disease- or insect-infested trees, dead, damaged, or down trees, or trees affected by fire or insect attack. This legislation includes trees imminently susceptible to fire or insect attack that refers to any area in which 10 percent or more of the conifer basal area has been lost to drought, insect, or disease related mortality in the last 10 years.

This amendment also mandates removal, without regard to size limitations or retention standards where removal is necessary for the health, protection or restoration of the forest. Because the amendment addresses an emergency situation, it necessarily encompasses forests, such as those impacted by the California spotted owl report or the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project report.

In spite of these requirements, environmental concerns will be met. U.S. Forest Service Chief Jack Ward Thomas and his staff reviewed the amendment, suggested modifications, and evaluated the Forest Service's technical and operational capability to meet its requirements. The amendment neither authorizes salvage timber sales on lands specifically protected by Congress, nor does it forgo environmental requirements. An environmental assessment must be prepared which will satisfy the National Environmental Policy Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. Speaker, the people of my district and my State need our national forests to be managed properly. This legislation will begin to alleviate this urgent problem. I urge my colleagues to support the Taylor emergency timber salvage sale amendment.

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